Dear Howard, 8/14/72

Before supper, anticipating tomorrow's potential needs when I am in D.C., I went to the Tiger file for the file of Khruschev, Correspondence. One letter in it, the original draft and the final form (which show the graph added by request in comparing) is what I wanted. But it is barren except for one clipping and one cross reference.

Perhaps it is one you borrowed and haven't returned. I'll be quite distress if this is not the case because there is but one other person who has wandered through those files and he has not acknolwedged taking anything from that one. When the return of what he has became an issue recently, he made no reference to this, no suggestion that could be interpreted as having ever been in that particular file.

If JP has it, the chances of his acknolwedging it now are slight. Therefore, I'd best make some notes before the event grow dimmer.

At the time of the so-called "kitchen debate" I felt that neither Khruschev nor Nixon was really serious about peaceful co-existence, felt that it was a very good idea and a way of bringing change, and decided to challenge the whole Soviet Union to peaceful competition in chicken raising. I felt that my attention to the idea would have the potential of getting something along this line started.

But because it involved policy and possible issues of delicacy to which I might not be sensitive, my major activity then being farming, I sounded out a few customers on the idea. I am sure there were more but I have clear recollections of two. One is Henry Zon, a former reporter then probably with the AFL-CIO COPE but possibly in his own p.r. firm, and Bill Costello, formerly with CBS but then with Mutual and writing on the side. Bill like the idea so much he told me to whom to take it. I think he placed the call on the spot from his office, then in the Investment Bldg, and put me on the phone. The call was to the chief of the European desk of USIA, a man with a German accent (slight) named Walter as I recall. I had a draft of the letter. He read it and flipped. If not he the State dept later suggested adding a graph. In any event, I sent him the revised letter, he had a copy of the draft, and they seemed quite happy.

I went there in such haste, so excitedly, that I forgot to feed the parking meter in the block west of his office, then Penna Ave and 18, nw, as I remember. I had a ticket when I got back.

Soon things started happening. I was asked to go to the USSR and teach them how to raise better chickens and produce more and better eggs. That call came from a man whose unusual name made it easier to remember. His is Lorrie (phon). I think there was an aormail envelope and I wrote his name and phone number on it and the name of someone in Agriculture he asked me to contact. They were all for it. They said they could pay all expenses but transportation (I arranged for a poultry group to pay that), and then the deal fell through. But everyone was excited about it, and when Kh came to the U.S. I was asked to invite him to visit our farm. It never happened, but there was an indefinite arrangement for the Mrs. K party to do it if they could while he was with Ike and Camp David, a bit further from D.C. I think Mrs. K got hung up with some society women in Va., and it is possible there was no such intention, despite what we had been told.

Maybe peaceful competeition would have become a reality without this, for it was already past time for it, but I know of no earlier challenge/invitation to it, and I do know a long series of exchanges did follow.

My challenge to the entire agricultural economy of the USSR was a bit less arrogant than it seemed for we had by then won every first prize in poultry for the US and I was confident our methods were superior to theirs. I offered to include cooking, where we were both national champions, so that need not be considered arrogant, either.

We have never discussed this. My subsequent letters, for TIGER, you do know about. I don't recall if my contemporaneous Missle Crisis notes were in this file, but I know my letter, before any but the official interpretation was even suggested, was there. And since then I have seen no reason to change my "instant analysis". I regret very much not having it. As Lil says, I usually make enough copies to file in duplicate, bit I've gone through the entire file and there is no misiled copy. That all copies of all letters are gone is at the very least perplexing. And I consulted the old Latin America file, for a book tentatively contracted in title to [illegible] in the State Dept, that is), but everything on Cuba is gone, so I'm certain that was all moved into the TIGER file...If you have this, please let me know. If you haven't, can you find a way of asking JP if he has it, saying I'veasked you, etc? MM